# OHMVR COMMISSION MEETING Pismo Beach, CA

**December 12, 2014** 

**STAFF REPORT:** Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan (DRECP)

**STAFF:** Connie Latham – DRECP Project Coordinator

SUBJECT: Draft DRECP EIR/EIS Notice of Availability – Public Comment Period

# **Summary**

The California Energy Commission (CEC), Bureau of Land Management (BLM), California Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW), and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) have prepared a Draft Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement (Draft EIR/EIS) and a proposed BLM Land Use Plan Amendment for the Draft Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan (Draft DRECP).

The 106-day public comment period for the Draft DRECP closes on January 9, 2015.

#### Discussion

The DRECP is a long-term, utility-scale renewable energy and conservation plan. The DRECP is comprised of three elements that form an integrated interagency plan for permitting renewable energy and electric transmission line development in the Mojave and Colorado/Sonoran deserts of southern California: 1) BLM's proposed Land Use Plan (LUPAs) Amends to the California Desert Conservation Area Plan; 2) the FWS's proposed General Conservation Plan; and 3) California Department of Fish and Wildlife's proposed Natural Community Conservation Plan.

The Draft DRECP includes six alternatives, or proposed approaches, for achieving the DRECP goals.

**Preferred Alternative –** Under this alternative, renewable energy development is distributed across the plan area; **moderate** development flexibility. Approximately 2 million acres of development focus areas. Recreation designation on over 3.6 million acres of BLM-managed lands (SRMAs, ERMAs, and Open OHV Areas, etc.).

Note: with the exception of the No Action Alternative, all action alternatives would have an actual development foot print of approximately 177,000 acres. Also, all Alternatives would add just over 1 million acres of new SRMA designation. All action alternatives, under BLM LUPAs, would mitigate for impacts to recreation within Development Focus Areas.

**Alternative 1 (Disturbed lands and low resource conflict Alternative) –** Under this alternative, renewable energy development is confined to **low** conflict disturbed lands. Approximately 1.1 million acres of development focus areas.

Alternative 2 (Increased Geographic and Technology Flexibility Alternative) – Under this alternative, renewable energy development is distributed across the plan area; **maximum** geographic and technology flexibility. Approximately 2.5 million acres of development focus areas.

**Alternative 3 (Geographically balanced alternative) –** Under this alternative, renewable energy development is distributed across the plan area; **moderate** development flexibility. Approximately 1.4 million acres of development focus areas.

Alternative 4 (Geographically balanced alternative with variance lands) – Under this alternative, renewable energy development is distributed across the plan area. Approximately 1.6 million acres of development focus areas with nearly all of the nearly 600,000 acres of BLM's Western Solar Plan variance lands.

**Alternative 5 (No Action) –** Under this alternative, renewable energy permitting continues on a project by project bases.

### **Commission Action**

The Commission may:

- 1. Take no action.
- 2. Submit a comment letter to California Energy Commission (CEQA Lead).

#### **Attachments**

Attachment 1 – DRECP Notice of Availability from California State Clearinghouse.

Attachment 2 – DRECP Alternative Comparison Table









California Energy Commission

California Department of Fish and Wildlife

U.S. Bureau of Land Management

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

# **Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan**

**Subject:** Notice of Availability, Draft Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact

Statement for the Draft Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan

Date: September 26, 2014

California State Clearinghouse #: 2011071092

BLM #: BLM/CA/PL-2014/025+1793

The California Energy Commission (CEC), as Lead Agency under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), and the U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), as Lead Agencies under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), have prepared a Draft Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement (Draft EIR/EIS) and Proposed Land Use Plan Amendment for the Draft Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan (DRECP).

What is the Proposed Project? The DRECP is a long-term, utility-scale renewable energy and conservation plan. The DRECP is comprised of three elements that form an integrated interagency plan for permitting renewable energy and electric transmission line development in the Mojave and Colorado/Sonoran Deserts of southern California: 1) BLM's proposed Land Use Plan Amendments to the California Desert Conservation Area Plan, Bishop Resource Management Plan, and Caliente/Bakersfield Resource Management Plan; 2) the FWS's proposed Habitat Conservation Plan (General Conservation Plan); and 3) the California Department of Fish and Wildlife's (CDFW) proposed Natural Community Conservation Plan.

For additional information or to read the Draft EIR/EIS, visit the DRECP website at: www.drecp.org.

<u>What is included in the Draft EIR/EIS?</u> The Draft EIR/EIS describes the Proposed Alternative, evaluates five alternatives (plus a No Action Alternative, defining the actions expected to occur if the DRECP is not approved). It describes the potential environmental impacts associated with implementation of each alternative, and presents mitigation measures that could avoid or minimize these impacts, if adopted by the CEC, CDFW, BLM, USFWS, or other responsible agencies.

<u>Impacts of the Proposed Plan.</u> The EIR/EIS describes impacts in approximately 80 environmental resource impact categories, within 23 environmental resource areas. Of these 80 impact categories, there are 17 significant unmitigable impacts – 8 of these significant impacts would occur only in the No Action Alternative. The No Action Alternative would not have the conservation and LUPA benefits of the five action alternatives. The analysis in the Draft DRECP and EIR/EIS suggests the Preferred Alternative will be most effective at achieving the DRECP goals of conserving the unique desert landscape, minimizing and mitigating the effects of incidental take of sensitive species, streamlining renewable energy production, and meeting other DRECP Planning Goals.

Sites Listed Pursuant to Government Code section 69526.5. Pursuant to Government Code section 69526.5, CalEPA maintains lists of sites that potentially contain hazardous waste and other forms of contamination. Some of these sites are located in the DRECP area. The list of sites, including all sites in the DRECP planning area, may be found at <a href="http://www.calepa.ca.gov/sitecleanup/corteselist/default.htm">http://www.calepa.ca.gov/sitecleanup/corteselist/default.htm</a>. For more information about the lists maintained pursuant to Government Code section 69526.5, see <a href="http://www.calepa.ca.gov/sitecleanup/corteselist/Background.htm">http://www.calepa.ca.gov/sitecleanup/corteselist/Background.htm</a>.

Availability of the Draft Plan and EIR/EIS. The Draft DRECP and EIR/EIS will be released for public review on September 26, 2014. It will be available for review and download at <a href="https://www.drecp.org">www.drecp.org</a>, local area libraries and agency offices, and a DVD will be provided upon request. To request a DVD, please send an email request to [drecp.info@energy.ca.gov] or call (916) 654-4818 with the mailing address. For a list of local area libraries and agency offices that have the document (most on DVD), please see the lists below or go to <a href="https://www.drecp.org/draftdrecp">www.drecp.org/draftdrecp</a>.

<u>Submitting Comments on the Draft Plan and EIR/EIS.</u> Written comments must be postmarked or received by electronic mail or fax no later than <u>Friday</u>, <u>January 9</u>, <u>2015</u>. Information on submitting comments may be found at <u>www.drecp.org</u>.

To submit comments, please deliver or send them to the following:

Email Address: docket@energy.ca.gov

Fax: (916) 654-4421 U.S. Mail or Other Delivery Address:

California Energy Commission Dockets Office, MS-4

Docket No. 09-RENEW EO-01

1516 Ninth Street

Sacramento, CA 95814-5512

When attaching comments to an e-mail, please use either Microsoft Word format or Portable Document Format (PDF). Please also include "DRECP NEPA/CEQA" in the subject line or your email comment or first paragraph of your mail comment.

When submitting comments on the Draft DRECP and EIR/EIS, please include the name and means of contact for a person who would be available for later consultation if necessary. Please note that comments and information submitted will be available for public review at <a href="www.drecp.org">www.drecp.org</a>. Before including your address, phone number, email address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, be aware that any information submitted as part of your comment will become part of the public record. Additionally, this information may become available via Google, Yahoo, and any other internet search engines. You may choose to withhold contact information, but the agencies will not be able to consult with you if clarification of your comment is needed. While you may request in your comment to withhold your personal identifying information from public review, agencies cannot guarantee the ability to do so.

## **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AND UPCOMING EVENTS**

<u>Informational Overview Video.</u> The agencies have prepared an Informational Overview Video on the Draft DRECP and EIR/EIS. It is available at <a href="https://www.drecp.org">www.drecp.org</a>.

# Informational Webinar. An Informational Webinar will be held on Thursday, October 9, 2014.

The Informational Webinar will be an opportunity to learn about the Draft DRECP and EIR/EIS, how to navigate the plan and analysis, and how to provide public comments. To assist members of the public that may not have access to high-speed internet, several agency offices will be open to the public to view the Informational Webinar. Oral comments will not be taken during the Informational Webinar. The Webinar will be recorded and will be available at <a href="https://www.drecp.org">www.drecp.org</a> following the Webinar.

What: Informational Webinar on the Draft DRECP and EIR/EIS

When: Thursday, October 9, 2014

Time: 4 PM - 6 PM

To join the Webinar via internet: Go to https://energy.webex.com

Enter the meeting number: 921 097 196

Enter the meeting password: **drecp@Oct9** and follow the on-screen directions.

**To join via TELEPHONE ONLY** (no visual presentation): Call **1-866-469-3239** (toll-free in the U.S. and Canada). When prompted, enter the meeting number: **921 097 196**.

To join via MOBILE DEVICE: Download the WebEx app from

www.webex.com/overview/mobile-meetings.html.

If you have difficulty joining the meeting, please call the WebEx Technical Support number at 1-866-229-3239.

To watch the Webinar from an agency office, see the list of locations on the following page.

<u>Public Workshops</u>. A number of Public Workshops will be held during late October and early November 2014. Dates, times, and locations will be posted on <u>www.drecp.org</u>. The workshops will provide the public with an opportunity to learn more about the Draft DRECP and EIR/EIS, to speak with the specialists who developed the Draft DRECP and EIR/EIS, and to provide comments on the Draft DRECP and EIR/EIS. Written comments may be submitted or made orally at the workshops.

# Informational Webinar and Draft DRECP and EIR/EIS Document Viewing Locations

#### **Bakersfield**

Bureau of Land Management Bakersfield Field Office 3801 Pegasus Drive Bakersfield, CA 93308 (661) 391-6000 Office hours: 7:30am-4pm

#### **Bermuda Dunes**

California Department of Fish and Wildlife Bermuda Dunes Field Office 78078 Country Club Drive, Suite 109 Bermuda Dunes, CA 92203 (760) 200-9158 Office hours: 8am – 5pm

#### **Borrego Springs**

Anza-Borrego Desert State Park
Anza-Borrego Visitor Center – Discovery room
9200 Palm Canyon Drive
Borrego Springs, CA 92004-5005
(760) 767-5311
Office hours: 9-5pm

#### El Centro

Bureau of Land Management El Centro Field Office 1661 So. 4<sup>th</sup> Street El Centro, CA 92243 (760) 337-4400

# Office hours: 8am-4:30pm Needles

Bureau of Land Management Needles Field Office 1303 S. Hwy 95 Needles, CA 92363 (760) 326-7000 Office hours: 7:30am-4pm

## **Palm Springs**

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Palm Springs Fish and Wildlife Office 777 East Tahquitz Canyon Way Suite 208 Palm Springs, CA 92262 (760) 322-2070 Office hours 8:00am-4:30pm

#### **Barstow**

Bureau of Land Management Barstow Field Office 2601 Barstow Road Barstow, CA 92311 (760) 252-6000 Office hours: 8am-4:30pm

#### **Bishop**

Bureau of Land Management Bishop Field Office 51 Pacu Lane, Suite 100 Bishop, CA 93514 (760) 872-5000 Office hours: 8am-4:30pm

### Carlsbad

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Carlsbad Fish and Wildlife Service Office 2177 Salk Avenue, Suite 250 Carlsbad, CA 92008 (760) 431-9440 Office hours: 8am-4:30pm

#### Moreno Valley

Bureau of Land Management California Desert District 22835 Calle San Juan De Los Lagos Moreno Valley, CA 92553 (951) 697-5200 Office hours: 8am-4pm

## Ontario

California Department of Fish and Wildlife Inland Deserts Region Office 3602 Inland Empire Blvd, Suite C-220 Ontario, CA 91764 (909) 484-0167 Office hours: 8am–5pm

## **Palm Springs**

Bureau of Land Management
Palm Springs - South Coast Field Office
1201 Bird Center Drive
Palm Springs, CA 92262
(760) 833-7100
Office hours: 8am-4:30pm

Informational Webinar and Draft DRECP and EIR/EIS Document Viewing Locations					
Ridgecrest Bureau of Land Management Ridgecrest Field Office 300 S. Richmond Rd. Ridgecrest, CA 93555 (760) 384-5400 Office hours: 7:30am-4pm	Sacramento Bureau of Land Management California State Office - Public Room 2800 Cottage Way, Suite W-1623 Sacramento, CA 95825 (916) 978-4400 Office hours: 8:30am – 4:30pm				
	Sacramento California Energy Commission – Library 1516 Ninth Street Sacramento, CA 95814 (916) 654-4292 Office hours: 8:30am – 4:30pm				

## Libraries with the Document on DVD

## **Imperial County Libraries**

Brawley Public Library 400 Main Street Brawley, CA 92227

Camarena Memorial Public Library 850 Encinas Avenue Calexico, CA 92231

Meyer Memorial Library 105 South Lake Avenue Calipatria, CA 92233

Imperial County Library 1125 Main Street El Centro, CA 92243

El Centro Public Library 1140 N. Imperial Avenue El Centro, CA 92243

Holtville City Library 101 E. Sixth Street Holtville, CA 92250

City of Imperial Public Library 200 W. Ninth Street Imperial, CA 92251

Westmorland Branch Library 200 S. C Street Westmorland, CA 92281

## **Inyo County Libraries**

Inyo County Free Library 168 N. Edwards Street Independence, CA 93526

Lone Pine Library Corner of Washington & Bush Streets Lone Pine, CA 93545

Bishop Library Corner of Warren and Academy Streets 210 Academy Avenue Bishop, CA 93514

Big Pine Library 500 South Main Street Big Pine, CA 93513

Furnace Creek Library
Located in Death Valley National Monument
Cow Creek Road

Death Valley, CA 92328

Tecopa Library 408 Tecopa Hot Springs Road Tecopa, CA 92389

# **Los Angeles County Libraries**

Lancaster Library 601 W. Lancaster Blvd Lancaster, CA 93534 Lake Los Angeles Library 16921 East Ave O #A Palmdale, CA 93591

Palmdale City Library 700 E. Palmdale Blvd Palmdale, CA 93550

Los Angeles Public Library 630 W 5th Street Los Angeles, CA 90071-2002

## San Diego County Libraries

San Marcos Library 2 Civic Center Drive San Marcos, CA 92069

San Diego County Library – Julian 1850 Highway 78 Julian, CA 92036

San Diego County Library – Ramona Branch 1275 Main Street Ramona, CA 92065

Central Library 820 E Street San Diego, CA 92101

### San Bernardino County Libraries

Adelanto Branch Library 11497 Bartlett Avenue Adelanto, CA 92301

Apple Valley Branch Library 15001 Wakita Road Apple Valley, CA 92307

Barstow Branch Library 304 E. Buena Vista Street Barstow, CA 92311

Big Bear Lake Branch Library 41930 Garstin Drive Big Bear Lake, CA 92315

Hesperia Branch Library 9565 Seventh Avenue Hesperia, CA 92345

Needles Branch Library 1111 Bailey Avenue Needles, CA 92363 Twentynine Palms Branch Library 6078 Adobe Road Twentynine Palms, CA 92277

Victorville City Library 15011 Circle Drive Victorville, CA 92395

Yucca Valley Branch Library 57098 Twentynine Palms Hwy Yucca Valley, CA 92284

## **Kern County Libraries**

Kern County Library – Arvin 201 Campus Drive Arvin, CA 93203

Beale Memorial Library 701 Truxtun Avenue Bakersfield, CA 93301

Kern County Library – Baker 1400 Baker Street Bakersfield, CA 93305

Kern County Library – Bryce C. Rathbun 200 West China Grade Loop Bakersfield, CA 93305

Kern County Library – Eleanor Wilson 1901 Wilson Road Bakersfield, CA 93304

Kern County Library – Holloway-Gonzales 506 East Brundage Lane Bakersfield, CA 93307

Mojave Branch 16916 1/2 Highway 14, Space D2 Mojave, CA 93501

Kern County Library – Northeast 3725 Columbus Street Bakersfield, CA 93306

Kern County Library – Southwest 8301 Ming Avenue Bakersfield, CA 93311

Kern County Library – California City 9507 California City Blvd California City, CA 93505

Kern County Library – Delano 925 Tenth Avenue Delano, CA 93215 Kern County Library – Frazier 3732 Park Drive Frazier Park, CA 93225

Kern County Library – Kernville 48 Tobias Street Kernville, CA 93238

Kern County Library – Lamont 8304 Segrue Road Lamont, CA 93241

Kern County Library – Clara M. Jackson (Mcfarland) 500 West Kern Avenue Mcfarland, CA 93250

Kern County Library – Ridgecrest 131 East Las Flores Avenue Ridgecrest, CA 93555

Kern County Library – Shafter 236 James Street Suite 2 Shafter CA 93263

Kern County Library – Taft 27 Cougar Court Taft, CA 93268

Kern County Library – Tehachapi 1001 West Tehachapi Boulevard, Suite A-400 Tehachapi, CA 93561

Kern County Library – Wasco 102 7th Street Wasco, CA 93280

Kern County Library – Rosamond 3611 Rosamond Blvd Rosamond, CA 93560

#### **Riverside County Libraries**

Banning Library District 21 W. Nicolet Street Banning, CA 92220

Palo Verde Valley Library District 125 West Riverside Drive Blythe, CA 92225

Calimesa Library 974 Calimesa Blvd Calimesa, CA 92320 Canyon Lake Library 31516 Railroad Canyon Road Canyon Lake, CA 92587

Cathedral City Library 33520 Date Palm Drive Cathedral City, CA 92234

Coachella Library 1538 7th Street Coachella, CA 92236

Desert Hot Springs Library 11691 West Drive Desert Hot Springs, CA 92240

Indio Library 200 Civic Center Mall Indio, CA 92201

La Quinta Library 78-275 Calle Tampico La Quinta, CA 92253

Moreno Valley Public Library 25480 Alessandro Blvd Moreno Valley, CA 92553

Palm Desert Library 73300 Fred Waring Drive Palm Desert, CA 92260

Rancho Mirage Public Library 71-100 Highway 111 Rancho Mirage, CA 92270

#### **Other Libraries**

California State Library 914 Capitol Mall Rm 400 Sacramento, CA 95814-4802

Humboldt County Library 1313 3rd Street Eureka, CA 95501-0553

Fresno County Library HQ 2420 Mariposa Street Fresno, CA 93721-2204

San Francisco Public Library – Ref Center 100 Larkin Street San Francisco, CA 94102-4705

#### PART THREE: ALTERNATIVE PLAN DESIGNS

#### 3.8 DRECP Alternatives Comparison

Table 7. Summary of the Draft DRECP Alternatives

		Preferred Alternative	ALTERNATIVE 1	ALTERNATIVE 2	ALTERNATIVE 3	ALTERNATIVE 4	No Action Alternative
Renewable Energ	y Development						
Total acres of Development Focus Areas <sup>1</sup>		2,024,000	1,070,000	2,473,000	1,405,000	1,608,000	6,285,000
Total acres of public land within Development Focus Areas <sup>1</sup>	Federal	392,000 (19%)	99,000 (9%)	743,000 (30%)	231,000 (17%)	276,000 (17%)	2,854,000 (45%)
	Nonfederal	64,000 (3%)	55,000 (5%)	81,000 (3%)	62,000 (4%)	61,000 (4%)	188,000 (3%)
Total acres of private (Nonfederal) lands within Development Focus Areas <sup>1</sup>		1,569,000 (78%)	916,000 (86%)	1,649,000 (67%)	1,113,000 (79%)	1,272,000 (79%)	3,244,000 (52%)
Total estimated footprint impacts (all RE technologies and transmission) <sup>2</sup>		177,000	182,000	169,000	182,000	177,000	158,000
Study Area Lands <sup>3</sup>	DRECP Variance Lands* (acres)	13,000	37,000	_	_	588,000	588,000
	Future Assessment Areas (acres)	128,000	_	109,000	11,000	_	NA.
	Special Analysis Areas (acres)	42,000	_	_	_	_	NA.
Conservation							
Existing Conservation		7,662,000	7,662,000	7,662,000	7,662,000	7,662,000	7,662,000
BLM LUPA Conservation Designations <sup>3</sup>	National Landscape Conservation System lands	3,984,000	1,682,000	5,124,000	3,845,000	3,012,000	NA.
	Areas of Critical Environmental Concern	1,976,000	3,609,000	1,104,000	2,272,000	2,148,000	2,966,000
	Wildlife Allocation	157,000	799,000	14,000	144,000	446,000	NA.
Conservation Planning Areas		1,142,000	1,287,000	1,183,000	1,238,000	1,210,000	NA.
Estimated Compensation for footprint impacts <sup>7</sup>		284,000	237,000	499,000	259,000	275,000	Project-by-Project
Recreations							
Areas Managed for Recreation Emphasis		_	_	_	_	_	1,465,000
Existing Special Recreation Management Areas		193,000	193,000	193,000	193,000	193,000	193,000
Proposed Special Recreation Management Areas		2,531,000	2,537,000	2,463,000	2,531,000	2,489,000	_
Proposed Extensive Recreation Management Areas		879,000	_	_	_	_	_
Open Off-Highway Vehicle/Special Recreation Management Area		321,000	321,000	321,000	321,000	321,000	321,000

that they occur, and resources within these lands were not considered conserved in the conservation analysis.

\*\*ORECP Variance Lands represent the BLM Solar Programmatic EIS Variance Lands and other BLM hard identified through the LUPA as screened for the DRECP using BLM screening criteria. Alternative 4 and the No Action Alternative include the full extent of the Solar Programmatic EIS Variance Lands within the DRECP.

\*\*BLM LUPA Conservation Designation a scrage reported here includes the full extent of the conservation designation, which is BLM-administered land and non-BLM inholdings lands within the matrix of public lands, consistent with the attained BLM mapping approach for BLM resource management plant. There is no LUPA under the No Action Alternative; Areas of Critical Environmental Concerns within the Plan Area outside of the Legally and Legislatively Protected Areas and Military Expansion Minipation Lands. National Landscape Conservation System overlaps with Areas of Critical Environmental Concern Wildlife Allocation are reported at National Landscape Conservation System. [CONT D on page 43]

<sup>\*</sup>There are no Development Focus Areas under the No Action Alternative. Acreage reported here for the No Action Alternative is the area available for renewable energy development where megawants have been antigned in a spatial distribution that mimics current development gaterest and technology mizes.
\*For the action alternatives, the estimated ground disturbance is based on the aggregated high acream distribution, which overestimates the amount of megawant needed in the Development Focus Areas in each ecocogion rubarea in order to provide greater sking flexibility. The authorized ground disturbance under the DRECP would be limited to the amount of disturbance needed to accommodate 20,000 megawant of encowable energy development. The ground disturbance caternate for the No Action Alternative does not use an aggregated high accentation for megawant is not apartle and the amount of disturbance needed to accommodate 20,000 megawant of encowable energy development. The ground disturbance caternate for the No Action Alternative does not use an aggregated high accentation for megawant is not partial disturbation that mimics current development patterns and technology mizes. Impact respected here include peojets footprint impacts; the impacts respected here do not reflect operational impacts. For rolar, ground-mounted distributed generation, ground-mounted distributed generation, ground-mounted distributed generation, ground-mounted distributed generation, ground-mounted with facility constituted with facility constitution, assumed to be equivalent to the 'project accentage, and or eight-of-way within which all peojets facilities would be built. For wind development, the footprint impacts include all short-term and long-term impacts associated with facility constitution, which is not equivalent to the 'project acce,' and/or right-of-way necessary for wind project ricing. Effects associated with the wind 'project acce,' and or eight-of-way within which all peojets facilities would be built. For wind development, the foo